



Laurens County First Steps Partnership *Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report*

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**Total children in county under
age 6: 4772****Total Children in county
under 6 living in poverty %:
24.6%**

**Laurens County
Highlights**

- CTK successfully served 40 children and held local celebration at the Laurens River Park
- Child Care CQE Grants were implemented in three centers
- 4K CDEPP class opened at Kids n' Company

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

LCFS maintained all strategies, which include Family Literacy, Childcare Quality Enhancement, Childcare Training and Professional Development, Child Care Scholarships for Special Cases, and the Center for Excellence site at Pleasant View Child Development Center (PVCDC). A 4K CDEPP class was added at Kids n' Company, a private center that was able to maintain full enrollment. In addition, the Countdown to Kindergarten program expanded to include 40 children served by four certified teachers. It culminated in a celebration at the Riverbank Park in Laurens.

Highlights include the fact that PVCDC raised its quality level to Level B in one year of being named a Center of Excellence site. FS brought the unsafe playground to standard with \$16,000 and offered 15 child care scholarships.

Several special cases for child care included a partnership with the Safe Home. Plans were made with GLEMANS Head Start to partner in a Family Literacy program for the fall and an Infant/Toddler room was set up with agreements with Senior Options, Inc. and Laurens County School District 55.

LCFS received funding from the Dollar General Literacy Grant to offset the state budget cuts. It will enable both school districts to maintain their Family Literacy programs with adequate materials.

Sincerely yours,
Edith M. Davis
Executive Director
Laurens County First Steps

First Steps to School Readiness Strategy Areas

The First Steps initiative approaches children's school readiness needs in five ways:

Family Strengthening: A parent is a child's first and best teacher. First Steps works to help parents become the best parents they can be. First Steps also helps parents further their own education.

Healthy Start: Children's development and ability to learn are profoundly impacted by their health in the earliest years. First Steps works to help families understand children's health needs through education and screenings while also working to help them access needed health services.

Quality Child Care: Quality child care provides immediate and long-term learning benefits for children. First Steps works to expand the availability of quality child-care to families and to enhance the level of quality in existing child-care environments.

Early Education: Research shows that children who participate in high-quality preschool classes are more likely to start school ready to learn, as well as be more successful later in life. First Steps works to expand high-quality 3-year-old and 4-year-old kindergarten opportunities in public and private settings.

School Transition: The transition into kindergarten is a critical time that sets the tone for children's perspectives about the school years, as well their parents' perspectives. Making a strong initial connection between school and home -- and supporting both parents and students during this transition time -- has been shown to impact students' later school success and parents' later involvement during the school years.

2007-08 County Partnership Programs by Strategy

FAMILY STRENGTHENING.

Family Literacy – contracted in Laurens County School District 55 & 56

Program description: A GED class, child care, if needed; plus home visits and group meetings are provided to parents whose children are between the ages of birth and five, are likely to experience significant school readiness problems because of family literacy, parenting, and/or other barriers to successful development. Two visits per month per child or more based upon family needs are provided. Services are provided to those families under 150% poverty, most are under 100%, who also meet at least two of the targeting requirements such as: ESOL, teen mother, single parent, special need families, and families facing critical issues. A strong referral system has been developed to ensure that families receive services that meet their needs. The research-based Born To Learn Curriculum is used. In addition, mentors will fully implement the Dollar General Literacy Tool Kits (Dollar General Grant II) Books are distributed at every visit, limited lending libraries are available, and eligible children will be enrolled in the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program. Group meetings, focusing upon literacy complete the four required components of the Family Literacy program.

Program results:

The board closely monitored both school district Family Literacy programs. District 56 met its goal of maintaining 15 families in the program and met the average visits per month (1.69) and the average duration of visits (1.07). Group meetings were offered monthly and in April the Parent Mentor completed 100% of her home visits! Twenty-one adults and 21 children were served, including teens from Clinton High School. The well organized program is well supervised and operated with fidelity. More than 75% of the families were assessed with KIPS and more than 75% were assessed with ACIRI with positive results.

District 55 made every effort to support a Family Literacy program located in the community center in Gray Court, where the Center of Excellence site (PVCDC) is located. Attendance was poor in the GED class, parents did not buy into the home visitation program, so the board has moved the program to Sanders Center in Laurens where LCFS and GLEAMNS agreed to collaborate to serve parents of Head Start children who do not have a GED. An entirely new program, including new staff, a new Infant/Toddler room, and a new vision has been implemented for FY10.

Board members and staff believe that the Family Literacy model, when properly delivered, provides a life-changing experience for a family for years to come.

HEALTHY START.

Laurens County First Steps embeds health care/referrals into every strategy.

QUALITY CHILD CARE.

Child Care Quality Enhancement

Program description: This initiative is designed to increase the knowledge and skill sets of child care providers. It enhances their program capacity through direct observation of program practices and program enhancement plans. LCFS provides technical assistance, on-site visits, and works with the Directors/teachers to prepare an action plan for improving the quality of care provided. The goal is to increase the number of child care centers moving from one level to the next, with the ultimate goal of becoming Level A or above. Participating childcare centers will receive supplies and technical assistance based on their compliance with program criteria and documented needs. No money is given to centers directly. A Resource Library is available in the Child Care Enhancement Director's office. Small incentive grants, if funds are available, are used to assist with curriculum training in up to four sites.

Program results:

- Three child care centers were served with three enhancement grants (134 children) totaling \$17,000.
- Pre/post ECERS assessment showed a positive increase for teacher interactions, furnishings, and classroom materials. The average increase was .89, but one center went from 1.93 to 3.82.
- More than 100.5 hours of technical assistance was provided.
- At Kids n' Company we worked with teacher in the infant room. A child sized table and chairs were added for feeding older infants. Board books were added as well as age appropriate toys. Pre/Post ITTERS assessment showed a .81 increase.
- Back to Basics received two grants, one in the infant room where cribs were replaced. The two year old classroom added child size furniture, shelving to divide the room into centers and an art center was created with an easel and a small table for drawing and coloring. Materials were added to manipulative center for fine motor skills; the dramatic play area added child size kitchen furnishings dolls, and dress up clothes.
- Young World was funded for the two year old classroom. Child sized tables and chairs, shelving, books, manipulatives for fine motor, and dramatic play dress up clothes were provided. The staff attended training through LCFS.

Centers of Excellence

Program description: The Center of Excellence site is now located at the Pleasant View Child Development Center in Gray Court, SC. The board managed to plan to fund all nine components.

Program results:

- 70 served
- PVCDC moved from Level C to Level B in the one year period of this grant.
- In the fall of 2008, PVCDC was a small center with 3 classrooms serving about 20 young children and 10 afterschoolers. An additional classroom was added and enrollment increased to 70. Classrooms were enriched with numerous learning materials for the Montessori curriculum. Child sized furniture was added where needed, and cribs were purchased as the center grew. An infant/toddler playground was created where none had existed. Now children of all ages have access to a safe playground. Child care teachers participated in Creative Curriculum classes taught by Susan Graham. The director completed her class work and received certification in Montessori Infant/Toddler, one of only nine in SC. All four classrooms had pre/post ITTERS or ECERS assessments; each classroom improved at least 1.0; the average gain for the center was 1.54.

- On June 15, the operation of PVCDC was transferred from School District 55 to the Laurens YMCA. The LCFS worked very hard to save /raise funds to enable all nine components to be continued into the FY10 year.
- The Family Satisfaction Survey conducted in the spring was very positive! All parents noted the new playground equipment, positive attitudes of staff, and new learning materials. There was some stress over the change of operation.

Child Care Training & Professional Development

Program description: The purpose is to raise the quality of childcare in centers, home providers, and family group providers by aiding each site to move from one level to another. Childcare providers are given information regarding child development, safety/health issues, appropriate discipline practices, and developmentally appropriate learning activities based on the standards. The Child Care Enhancement Director provides all sites in Laurens County with information and a training schedule. She can assist Directors in preparing an action plan based upon an assessment using the ITERS, and ECERS. Training for all workers/directors is offered to enable them to maintain their certification and raise their level of education. These are provided through the Laurens County Early Childhood Network for a nominal fee. The number of sites with on-going visits is limited, generally from two to four. ECD101 classes through Piedmont Technical College at Laurens are conducted each semester and the TEACH Scholarship program is promoted. The sites are chosen through an application process in collaboration with the ABC Monitor's recommendations, which are then approved by the Child Care Task Force composed of board members who work with the CCE Director.

- 114 adults received training, unduplicated, that resulted in children having instructors with increased knowledge and training
- <60% of staff from our child care facilities participated in 8 or more hours of Child Care Quality Training
- With three sites closing, there were fewer workers in attendance, but 96 attendees were from Quality Enhancements sites; the remainder included some from outside the county.
- The number of hours of CCCCDC Certified Training included 9.5 hours and 55.5 met the CCCCDC registered training hours. The annual spring conference was cancelled, partly due to budget cuts, but every effort was made to send workers to the Spartanburg Early Childhood Conference where 78 workers received six hours training.
- The LCFS Early Childhood Network continues to provide training for the directors and for the child care workers at a very nominal fee in a local setting at times most convenient for the workers.
- Emphasis has been placed upon having fewer training sessions, but each is high quality. A needs assessment is conducted annually with the directors.

Child Care Scholarships

Program description: LCFS provides funds for child care scholarships using a sliding scale. Parents pay from \$10 - \$13 per week. In addition, an endowment funding using donations from individual contributors has been established with the Laurens County Community Foundation that will produce income for future children. The fund lost some principal during the downturn, but is beginning to bounce back. Additional contributions from the community are sought on a regular on-going basis. The scholarships are provided to individuals not eligible for ABC vouchers, or other resources. The initial target is 50% of poverty. New applicants are accepted

and assigned in priority order taking into account the number of spaces available. Placement occurs in the highest quality level center available and is limited to Level B, if available.

Program Results:

15 children were served in FY09. The LCFS board has agreed to serve “special cases” such as a homeless child from the Safe Home, or hardship cases that do not “fit” all of the present Center of Excellence criteria or that location. Example: a teen mother who desires to stay in high school and lives at home, but needs child care.

During the year, eight children who had attended the Center of Excellence site in Clinton at Thornwell were served with scholarships at Sunshine House in Clinton. Only one child remained at that facility throughout the year. It was the desire of the board to serve the children who had expected Thornwell to be available for at least two years.

EARLY EDUCATION.

S.C. Child Development Education Pilot Program (CDEPP)

Program description: CDEPP offers state-paid tuition of 4-year-old kindergarten classes to eligible students living in the 37 trial and plaintiff school districts involved in the school funding equity lawsuit, *Abbeville et al. vs. South Carolina*. First Steps oversees CDEPP 4K classes offered in non-public school environments. To qualify for state-paid tuition, a student’s family must qualify for TANF or free/reduced-price lunch, be 4 years old by Sept. 1, 2007, and live in an eligible school district.

Program results:

- 23 students served
- Kids n’ Company is the only private provider offering CDEPP 4K classes
- A full enrollment of 19 was maintained throughout the year. The maximum number that could successfully be taught was 19. A waiting list was maintained and children were added as spaces became available. The local center worked diligently to upgrade their facility, their playground, the level of instruction of the teacher, equipment, materials, and expertise.
- Dr. Anita McLeod, FS 4k Coordinator worked with the Director and teachers to fully implement the Creative Curriculum model. The center completely revamped its program, beginning with taking everything out of the classroom, painting the walls, bringing in quality furniture and learning materials. The playground and outside landscaping was upgraded and the staff at the center worked diligently to raise the standards. The 4K teacher enrolled in training and responded well to regularly scheduled on site visits. The collaborative working relationship between the Center Director, workers, CCQE Director and the Executive Director of FS is a positive one. This results in sharing of information and helps to solve any issues that may arise.

SCHOOL TRANSITION.

Countdown to Kindergarten

Program description: The program served 40 children with four certified teachers and was designed to successfully bridge at-risk students into the K – 12 environments.

Program results:

- 40 children were served as planned
- 39 of the children successfully completed their visits; one child missed two.
- Positive comments were received from all four teachers about the attitude of the parents toward their lessons and following through on suggestions.

A final celebration was held at the River Park. The families were invited to play on the playground, and then attend a magic show provided by Boo Boo the Clown! Following that, the families shared chicken, potato chips, popsicles, cookies, and tea served by the Countdown teachers and donated by Fatz Café, Todd Distributors, and Total Carolina Care. A fun time was had by all!

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

<u>Expenditures</u> By Funding Source	
State Appropriation (<i>Fund 10</i>)	\$ 126,628
E.I.A. Appropriation (<i>Fund 55</i>)	\$ 19,311
Lottery Appropriation (<i>Fund 35</i>)	\$ -
C.D.E.P.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 60</i>)	\$ 88,094
C.O.E. Appropriation (<i>Fund 65</i>)	\$ 131,895
N.F.P. Appropriation (<i>Fund 70</i>)	\$ -
State Private (<i>Fund 15</i>)	\$ 2665
Local Private (<i>Fund 20</i>)	\$ 24488
Federal (<i>Fund 30</i>)	\$ 63,049
In-Kind (<i>Fund 25</i>)	\$ 75,556
TOTAL:	\$ 571,295

<u>Expenditures</u> By Program / Strategy Name	
Parents As Teacher	\$ 147,598
Parents As Teacher In House	\$ 27,191
Family Literacy	\$ 53,689
Full Day 4K	\$ 87,303
Countdown to Kindergarten (CTK)	\$ 10,624
Child Care Quality Enhancement	\$ 77,074
Child Care Training & Professional Development	\$ 51,867
Scholarship Initiatives	\$ 56,758
	\$
	\$
	\$
	\$
Indirect Programmatic Functions	\$ 16,087
Administrative Functions	\$ 43,104
TOTAL:	\$ 571,295

NOTABLE DONORS

<i>DONOR'S NAME</i>	AMOUNT
Child Care Fees	\$ 605.00
Rotary Bucks for Books	\$ 161.70
Phone and Ink Cartridges Recycling	\$ 92.45
Belk Charity Day	\$ 727.19
Purse/Shoe Sale	\$ 1,067.00
Bi Lo Boosters	\$ 41.39
Churches	\$ 1,200.00
Wal-Mart Grant	\$ 1,000.00
Wal-Mart Rotary Match	\$ 1,000.00
United Way	\$ 5,000.00
Individuals	\$ 1,736.00
Clinton and Laurens Rotary	\$ 494.00
Laurens Rotary (Restricted to GED Scholarships)	\$ 140.00
Clinton Rotary (Restricted to GED Scholarships)	\$ 140.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 130.55
Dollar General Grant	\$ 15,025.00
Ronald Mc Donald House of Charities	\$ 3,900.00
TOTAL:	\$ 32,460.28

Local Match Percentage for FY 2009: 84.7%

COUNTY PARTNERSHIP BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Frances Kennedy	Pre-K/Primary Education	Amie Avery	Parent
Robin Stimman	Pre-K/Primary Education	Holley Darden	Parent
Dr. Ken Alexander	Family Education	Prondolyn Copeland	Early Childhood Education
Connie Parker	Family Education	Alicia Gagin	Early Childhood Education
Karen Coker	Childcare/Early Childhood Ed.	Amy Blakely	Early Childhood Education
Charmaine Moore	Childcare/Early Childhood Ed.	Sharon Longshore	DHEC
Geoffrey Stephens	Transportation	Tina Owens	DSS
Beth Hodges	Non-Profit	Gwendolyn Moore	County Head Start
Melissa Patton	Business	Lisa McDonald	Business
Carolyn Smith	Faith	Ann Szypulski	Library
Rev. Tony Crouch	Faith	Tara Dean	District 55
Maureen Tiller	District 56	Anne Sheppard	Leg. Delegation
Hal Milam	Leg. Delegation	Frances Davenport	Leg. Delegation
John Young	Leg. Delegation		

COUNTY DATA SNAPSHOT

In FY09, First Steps County Partnerships statewide made it a priority to become increasingly data-driven. County Partnerships successfully began using powerful new components of the First Steps data system, and County Partnerships also utilized data in new ways to drive their FY09 program plans. In addition to enhanced program data tracking, County Partnerships are also focusing on the best available data about children and families to best understand their communities' needs. At the end of FY08 and the beginning of FY09, County Partnerships began an extensive analysis of this data, including data about the risk factors known to impact children's potential school success, such as low birth weight, teen mothers, and families living in poverty. A county-level risk data report is included in the subsequent pages of this report.



Schmooney Day at Pleasant View Child Development Center

Beth Hodges, Child Care Enhancement Director, modeled for Parents reading to children. Every family received a Schmooney and the author, Bob Shumaker, was the featured speaker for the day. The mascot, Schmooney, made an appearance at the center during the day.

Pleasant View Child Development Center is the Center of Excellence in Laurens County.





Countdown to Kindergarten ended with a celebration at the River Park in Laurens.

The Laurens County First Steps board has placed a lot of emphasis on Family Literacy based on research that shows if you can change the level of education of the parent, especially the mother, the child is more likely to be successful in school. A new collaboration with GLEAMNS Head Start at Sanders Center is providing access to families in Laurens. The MS Bailey Center in Clinton provides access. According to Nancy Roland, Director of the program at MS Bailey, "a family can be changed for life through this program."



The SC General Assembly created in 1999 the South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Initiative as a "comprehensive, results-oriented initiative for improving early childhood development by providing, through county partnerships, public and private funds and support for high quality early childhood development and education services for children by providing support for their families' efforts toward enabling their children to reach school ready to learn"...here's what happened next:

The first county meeting was held on September 9, 1999. Board officers were formally nominated and elected in December of 1999. Edith Davis was

employed as the Executive Director July 17, 2000 and remains in the position. During the early years the emphasis was on the expansion of 4K in Laurens County School District 55 & 56, but as the 4K CDEPP funding came through, LCFS reduced the amount of funding to 4K from funding 203 slots in 2003 to 100 in 2006. In 2007 4K slots were reduced to 40. Today, FS funds two classrooms at a private child care center, Kids n' Company with 25 approved children.

The second priority was to expand the Parents As Teacher program in both school districts. In 2006 the model was changed to Family Literacy serving fewer families, but with greater intensity.

The third priority has been quality child care. In 2003, FS contracted with the Laurens YMCA to hire a Child Care Quality Enhancement Director, Beth Hodges. Beth has completed all of the necessary training to be a SC certified Technical Assistant. The program now includes training and support for all of the child care centers. The Director's Forum began in 2005 and has resulted in an expanded program, the Laurens County Early Care & Education Network, which provides many professional development opportunities at a nominal fee locally. Local TEACH scholarships have made it possible for many child care workers to train at the local Higher Education Center through Piedmont Tec.

Laurens County helped to pilot the Countdown to Kindergarten program beginning in 2004 and has continued the program annually. In 2009, a total of 40 children were served successfully.

In 2008 LCFS received one of the Center of Excellence grants for Thornwell Child Development Center. Its board decided to close the center and the new site was selected to be the Pleasant View Child Development Center, a Montessori site located in Gray Court, SC. It now serves over 70 children.

Numerous grants have been received including McDonald's, Wal Mart, Target, Dollar General Literacy Grants (3), PSARUS, and the Jostens's Foundation. LCFS has been a Untied Way agency since 2002.

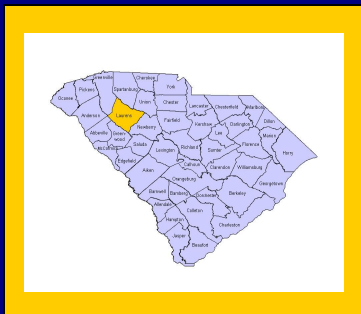
In 2008 LCFS began providing child care scholarships in the Center of Excellence site, but also has funded a number of "special cases" including referrals from DSS and the Safe Home.

The ***FS to School Readiness Endowment Fund*** was established with the Laurens County Foundation in June 2006. The principle will remain in perpetuity with the interest to be used to provide child care scholarships to mothers who will stay in school or go to work. The fund exceeded \$12,000, but presently stands at \$9063.28 after the recent downturn. A campaign to bring the fund back up to the minimum of \$10,000 is in progress.

Special recognition needs to be given to Laurens County School District 55! It has provided office space, access to the Internet, telephone, fax, and technical support since the beginning. This has allowed funding,(state, federal, and private) to flow to children and families in Laurens County. Admin costs have been kept very low by hiring a part-time director and staff.

The 10th Anniversary celebration is scheduled for Monday, October 12, 2009 at 5:30 PM at the Higher Education Center. Former Senator Jim Bryan, who helped craft the legislation, will be the keynote speaker. Storyboards from former years, as well as the present, will be on hand so the public can trace the journey that LCFS has made over the ten years. Former board chairs and the public is invited to celebrate!

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2008 School Readiness Risk Profile Laurens County

Total Children Under Six: 4,939

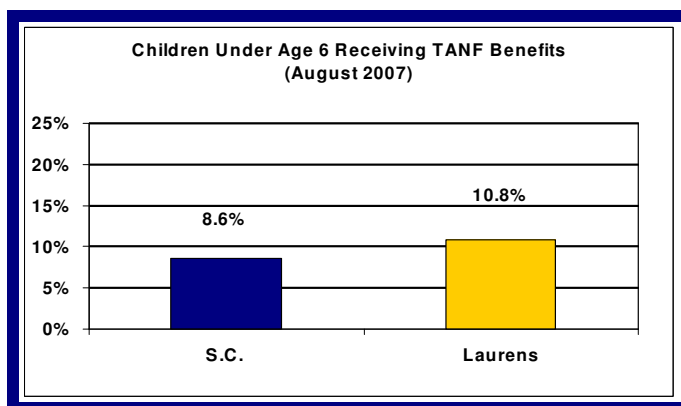
CHILD POVERTY (Children in Families Receiving TANF Benefits)

Statewide Average (2007): 8.4%

Laurens County (2007): 10.8%

Fast Fact: Roughly 1 in 10 Laurens County children has an annual family income equivalent to \$10,325 (or less) for a family of four. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 45% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Children in deep poverty often face a wide variety of school readiness obstacles, ranging from inadequate prenatal care and nutrition to low maternal education.
- 531 of Laurens County’s 4,939 children under age 6 received federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits during 2007, indicating a family income at or below 50% of the federal poverty definition.



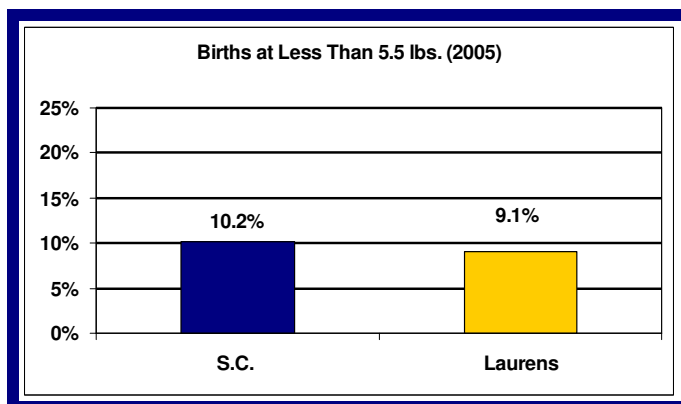
CHILDREN AT LOW BIRTH WEIGHT (Less Than 5.5 lbs.)

Statewide Average (2005): 10.2%

Laurens County (2005): 9.1%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 10 Laurens County children is born at a weight less than 5.5 lbs. A recent statewide analysis suggests that at least one-third of these children (36%-52% depending on weight category) will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Babies born at low weights are often prone to developmental delays associated with early academic failure.
- Many have received inadequate prenatal care and suffer from significant health complications.
- 70 of the 770 children born in Laurens County during 2005 weighed less than 5.5 lbs.



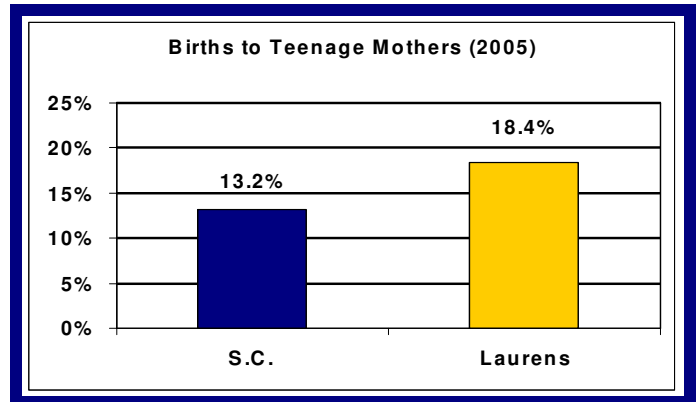
BIRTHS TO TEENAGE MOTHERS

Statewide Average (2005): 13.2%

Laurens County (2005): 18.4%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 5 Laurens County births is to a mother under 20 years of age. A recent statewide analysis suggests that 43% of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Teenage parents often lack the maturity and knowledge required to optimally fulfill important parental responsibilities, are less likely to advance their own educational attainment and often fail to advance beyond low-income status.
- 142 of the 770 children born in Laurens County during 2005 had teenage mothers.



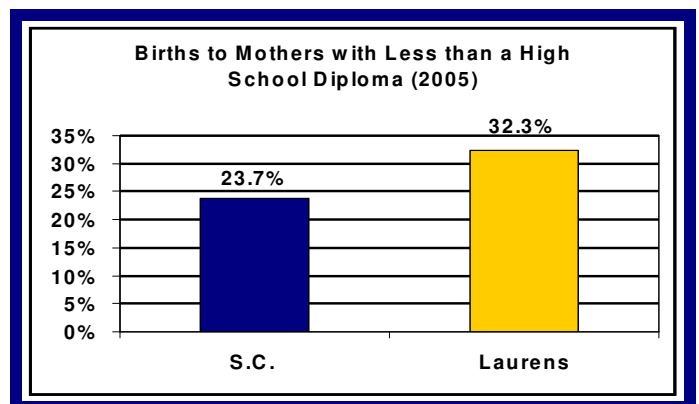
BIRTHS TO MOTHERS WITH LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Statewide Average (2005): 23.7%

Laurens County (2005): 32.3%

Fast Fact: Nearly 1 in 3 children in Laurens County is born to a mother possessing less than a high school diploma. A recent statewide analysis suggests that roughly half (48%) of these children will be retained or score at the “below basic” level (PACT) by third grade.

- Research suggests that a mother’s own educational attainment is closely linked to the subsequent academic performance of her children.
- 249 of the 770 children born in Laurens County during 2005 had mothers with less than a high school diploma.



All data provided by the SC Budget and Control Board’s Office of Research and Statistics